

Power of Together SECT 2

Meeting Minutes – August 13, 2019

Barb Silver opened the meeting by introducing John Reilly, who is the VP of Operations for the Ocean Community YMCA. The YMCA generously donates their Community Room for our quarterly meetings. John congratulated PoT2 on being such a wonderful community-focused organization.

Barb announced that before the meeting our membership totaled 112. Barb then introduced our three newest members: Debbie Pryor, Stephana Pecher and Linda Cavanaugh. (This brings our membership to 115.) Barb reported that due to our growth in membership at our last meeting we were able to donate \$11,200 to Veterans Equine Therapeutic Services (VETS), our May 2019 recipient. Since PoT2's inception in April 2016 we have donated a grand total of \$119,250 to area non-profits.

Thor Torgersen, the VETS co-founder, instructor and Marketing Director reported on how the organization is using our donation. He movingly described how significant these funds are to the success of their program, and how profoundly thankful the organization is. VETS has begun a mounted therapeutic program and has hired a professionally certified riding instructor. They are in the process of purchasing one or two larger-breed horses that the veterans can ride. They have also developed marketing materials to distribute to VA locations in the area and to use at conferences and other gatherings. The goal is to get the word out to area veterans about the program.

Barb went over the ground rules for pitching a worthy cause, and Thor drew the name of the first presenter, Christie Williams. Christie spoke on behalf of Flock Theater of New London, a local theater group that performs Shakespeare in the Connecticut College Arboretum and at Wilcox Park. They also perform at the Red Barn at Mitchell College, the O'Neill Cottage, and provide theater educational programs to thousands of school children. The program they would like to fund is for fourth graders and incorporates Connecticut state history with performance of shadow puppet plays. The program is specifically designed to support public school students with low levels of English fluency and reading proficiency, and through the program they have seen double-digit increases in fluency among these students. The funds would be used to introduce the program in three new schools and serve an additional 300 children.

The second presenter was John Reilly of the Ocean Community YMCA and he spoke about their program "Reach and Rise". The program aims to bring a caring adult mentor into the lives of at-risk children, many of who are on the autism spectrum. They work with parents, schools, guidance counselors and doctors to identify children who will benefit from an adult role model and bring them into the program. The adults are given 15 hours mentoring training, CPR and First Aid

certification, and are screened through background checks. The children, ages 8-15, meet with their mentors once a week and with the larger group twice a week for arts and crafts and camp. PoT2's funding would allow them to run the program for a year.

The third presenter was Clare Sheridan on behalf of the Stonington Free Library. The library is a free community resource serving all parts of Stonington. Among its many programs it offers a summer reading program and a story hour for children. The library has very limited space and need funds to build a new technology area for young people. The funds would be used for technology upgrades (including two new computers), new furniture, a wireless printer, a large round work table and two oversized comfy chairs.

The group voted and the Reach and Rise program at the YMCA received the most votes.